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**Queering the Universal
Rhetoric of Objects:**

Myth, Industrial Design, and the
Politics of Difference





Queering the Universal Rhetoric of Objects: Myth, Industrial Design, and the Politics of Difference

Industrial design differs from architecture and engineering in one interesting way—it is the only profession that became a myth before it reached maturity.

George Nelson

The person who fashions the environment and solves the equation between desirable patterns of behavior and the setting in which people act attains a position of power as great as that of the politician.

Abraham A. Moles

Introduction

This is a study of rhetoric. More specifically, it is a study of the rhetoric spoken through the everyday object. From vegetable peelers, cameras, and watches to toothbrushes, cars, and furniture, industrial design is the profession responsible for the design of everyday things. The commonality that binds a profession responsible for the design of such a wide spectrum of objects is that it is the design of the mass-manufactured object. While perhaps endowed with a sense of nobility in trying to accommodate the everyday needs of millions of people, industrial design, likewise, holds the power to access and shape the everyday interactions between people and their environment.

Industrial design is often thought of in terms of the beauty it brings to objects of utility. We have all had the experience of being willingly seduced by a piece of design: the sleekness of a kitchen appliance or the whimsy of an umbrella. However, industrial design also considers *users* and their reception to an object—how it feels, how it operates—in addition to how it looks. Design functions in a very social way: objects are used by a variety of people under

different social circumstances, and more often than not, objects become a marker of identity. Therefore this project seeks to understand the *frameworks* through which the object is designed and consumed: what is being communicated through the object, how it speaks a certain language, what it says to culture, and what it speaks about our identity. This project is, hence, about the *rhetoric* of objects and industrial design.

I began studying industrial design at the California College of Arts and Crafts in the fall of 2000. What attracted me to industrial design, in the research that preceded my transition into this chosen field, was what I believed to be its relevance to a physical and lived existence; it seemed so completely relevant to people's lives. As I went through my education, what became even more evident to me was the importance of understanding a user's interaction with an object so that it could better serve its purpose within people's lives. I believed that industrial design could make lives better. I believed that good design had the power to change lives. I was inspired by a sense of democracy in industrial design, as field that focused its intentions on helping the everyday user: the designer advocating on behalf of the user against hostile and hard to use objects. Not only did industrial designers make products, but *better* products that were beautiful and produced with people in mind.

However, what also became clear were the contradictions in this ideological model into which I had been indoctrinated. As I rode the San Francisco bus lines, I wondered how industrial design was helping my fellow bus riders. Backpacks, iPods, bicycles, cell phones, rolling carts, water bottles were all fulfilling their roles and duties in people's lives. But I also began to wonder how industrial design was helping the woman alighting the bus with hands full of plastic grocery bags and young daughter in tow. Or the elderly woman who demanded in a harsh voice that I help to carry her cart aboard the bus in a language I did not recognize. How much access did these people have to the promise of a better life as told by industrial design? It seemed to me that this narrative of *good, better, and progress* was ensconced within a large economic framework that created criteria for inclusion of that promise. But if the rhetoric of industrial design stopped short in the faces of class and economic differences, what about other ideas of difference like sexuality, race, and gender?¹

As an emerging designer—a queer, Asian American designer—I began to notice the demographic of the industrial design profession into which I was about to embark. Should I be skeptical of an inclusive rhetoric that claims to provide a better life for all from a profession that offers a very *un*-inclusive image

of “all?” A 2002 survey conducted by the Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) gave a chilling professional gender distribution of 83percent male to 17percent female, and a professional profile where whiteness vastly overshadows all other ethnic difference. For me this was an important breakdown in the ideology of industrial designers as “advocates” for a broad range of users. There was a disconnect in the idea of representing a myriad of lived experiences and a discourse that seemed not to consider the subjectivities of sexuality, race, and gender. While I am not advocating for a reductive alternative of “multicultural” design full of queer people, women, and persons of color, I am trying to problematize the discourse of design that on one hand advocates for ideas of inclusion and universality, but rarely involves itself with the ideas of difference and lived identities.

Whenever I considered how the politics of difference intersected with industrial design, it always seemed to be a place of *non*-intersection. I was well rehearsed in the industrial design process and the research involved with the designing of products. In 2003, I was involved with a project designing toothbrushes for Glaxo Smith Kline. As in the initial stages of a design project, the design team performed the industrial design research process, making observations about user behavior: how people

held their brushes, their toothbrush routines, the amount of time they brushed, the reasons they bought toothbrushes, how many times a day they brushed their teeth. It was not important if they were gay, Latina, male: it was the behavior of these users—a behavior that was seemingly divorced from these identities—that the design team was interested in gathering for the design of a new toothbrush. These observations were important because they were based on a user's behavior, and not on a user's identity. This ethnographic research (as it is termed by the field of industrial design) seemed somehow “objective” in the sense that behavior was observed as factual and any issues of identity were seemingly unrelated to the design of the toothbrush.

Ethnographic research along with other design services has developed into what is broadly termed *industrial design*. It was not until 1978 that the IDSA officially defined the profession (the first part of seven paragraphs):

Industrial design is the professional service of creating and developing concepts and specifications that optimize the function, value and appearance of products and systems for the mutual benefit of both user and manufacturer.²

Through the early years and the first generation of American industrial designers (from the 1930s to the 1960s, termed the “golden age

of industrial design” by historian and curator Russell Flinchum), the profession notably operated within the realm of image-making and visual expression through products. Though if bound to the role of image and form creation, the role of the designer would be subject to a questionable necessity within the context of mass-production. Hence, there has been a marked transformation in the activities of the designer, as exemplified in the emergence of design consultancies that now offer design services (in response, or perhaps as part of the emergence of the post-Fordist industrial era). Industrial design is no longer simply a profession concerned with mere color and form. Nowadays designers manage a large series of activities that *result* in a design, from user-research and human factors to production and marketing. This, too, is explicated in IDSA’s definition of industrial design:

The industrial designer’s unique contribution places emphasis...most directly to human characteristics, needs and interests...[an] understanding of visual, tactile, safety and convenience criteria, with concern for the user.

...industrial designers are often retained for...problems that have to do with a client’s image...product and organization identity systems, development of communication systems, interior

space planning and exhibit design, advertising devices and packaging...³

Industrial design then cannot simply be understood in terms of manufacturing and products, but instead as a system of culture production that is invested in user behavior, user identification, user communication; in essence the *politics* of the user.

The word *design* comes from the Latin *designare*: *de-* (out) + *signare* (to mark), to mark our world. However, philosopher Vilem Flusser asks us to reconsider the simple understanding that design is giving symbol to our world. Instead, he places the understanding of (industrial) *design* among the closely partnered words of *technology*, *mechanics*, and *art*. He writes:

In English, the word *design* is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it means—among other things—‘intention’, ‘plan’, ‘scheme’, ‘plot’, ‘motif’... The word occurs in contexts associated with cunning and deceit. Falling into the same category as other very significant words: in particular, *mechanics* and *machine*. The Greek *machos* means a device designed to deceive—i.e. a trap—and the Trojan Horse is one example of this.

The Latin equivalent of the Greek *techne* is *ars*, which in fact suggests a metaphor similar to the English rogue’s ‘sleight of

hand’. The diminutive of *ars* is *articulum*—i.e. little art—and indicates that something is turned around the hand (as in the French *tour de main*).” Hence *ars* means something like ‘agility’ or the ‘ability to turn something to one’s advantage’, and *artifex*—i.e. ‘artist’—means a ‘trickster’ above all.⁴

The intent of this project is to show how industrial design speaks of universal progress and asks for our participation in this narrative as non-sexualized, non-racialized, non-gendered “universal” subjects in order to produce a particular version of the public. And by wielding the power of this universal myth that produces designations, inclusions, and exclusions, it prevents a discourse that takes into account *identity*—identity that is based on the everyday lived experience of users. My intent is not to challenge the current field of “Universal Design,” which focuses on designing for differently-abled people; rather it is the *rhetoric of universalism* that I am questioning, spoken by the field of industrial design that subscribes to the liberal notion of universal progress and its abilities to satisfy universally stated “human needs and aspirations.” Through its usage of universalism, industrial design manipulates its own discourse where difference is silenced, and succeeds in imbuing itself with *objective goodness*.

Additionally, I want to emphasize

that it is *not* the intent of this project to imagine a version of industrial design that designs *for* difference. This is a conclusion at which some readers may wish to arrive. I am not arguing for an essentialized difference that requires separate design solutions. However, I am challenging the current design discourse that positions culture by way of the object and in doing so denies the very real *social effects* associated with difference, such as heteronormativity. Since the idea of difference is socially constructed, a misguided advocacy for design based on essentialized differences would reify the false idea that *difference* is inherent and genetic (rather than a social phenomenon). Therefore it is necessary to discuss the inclusion (or exclusion, as the case maybe) of *difference* as the *politics of difference* and not a reductive difference based on the body.

This project is an attempt to reconcile the conflicts within industrial design: a force of culture production that finds it unnecessary to concern itself with the politics of identity. I still believe in the power of industrial design to make change and make life better. But I also believe that the politics of difference deeply matter within a design context. The discourse of industrial design often speaks of its emotive and communicative power through form; however, this project is not about aesthetics, how individual objects look, or the efficacy of the design methods that produce objects.

This project asks a larger question about how we speak about design, how we are not allowed to speak about design, and the rhetoric of the object: how it speaks to users, how it speaks to designers, and how it interacts with culture—especially the idea of queerness⁵. If design is about communication, then the politics of difference matters. And as soon as we are allowed to believe that sexuality, race, gender, and class do not matter, then there has already been a slight of hand.

And of course this is what the profession of industrial design is dedicated to—to take what is good today and make it better for more people tomorrow, because making anything better is the only road to human happiness.⁶

Henry Dreyfuss, President
Industrial Designers Society of
America, 1965

“Hands come in all shapes and sizes. We try to fit them all.”

In 1989, Sam Farber, a retired CEO of a cookware company, and his wife Betsey were vacationing in the south of France where they had rented a house to pursue their love of cooking, art, and entertaining. While preparing a light lunch for friends, Betsey’s arthritis made it difficult for her to peel apples for the apple tart she was making. Watching Betsey’s difficulty with the peeler, Sam wondered

why ordinary kitchen tools—from painful scissor loops to rusty metal peelers, all equipped with hard skinny handles—were so hostile to the hands. He asked, “Why can’t there be wonderfully comfortable tools that are easy to use? If you made tools like that, wouldn’t *everybody* want to have them?” It was this thought that gave birth to OXO International and a line of kitchen tools that came to be known as Good Grips.

OXO was founded with the philosophy of universal design, the principal of designing products that are easy to use for the largest possible spectrum of users. This meant making better cooking tools to make the simplest task, like peeling apples, easy for almost everyone to perform. OXO enlisted the services of the industrial design firm Smart Design to produce such a line of kitchen tools under this universal design philosophy. Using methods of user-centered research, the design team immersed itself in fieldwork, talking to consumers, examining competitive products, interviewing chefs, and spending time with a New York arthritis group to learn the difficulties associated with hand movement. The design team delved deeply into the range of manual dexterity and limitations, learning about acute disabilities, limited mobility, and declining hand strength associated with aging. Smart Design created hundreds of designs and tested dozens of grip shapes to understand

what wrist and hand motions would work for the widest range of people—young and old, large and small, left- and right-handed, with strong or weak grips.

The result was a line of 20 Good Grips products, including the Swivel Peeler, introduced in 1990 at the Gourmet Show in San Francisco. The Swivel Peeler had a reformed handle, large and oval to avoid hand strain and to prevent it from rotating in the hand. The new handle was made from a material called Santoprene that was soft and flexible for comfort and allowed an even distribution of pressure when peeling fruits and vegetables. Santoprene also had material properties that allowed the handle to be warm, non-slip and dishwasher safe. Moreover, Santoprene was a polypropylene rubber/plastic, which meant it was moldable, so that the handles could be made with flexible fins that bent under the fingers to give additional cushion and grip, even when hands were wet or soapy. OXO Good Grips went on to win numerous design awards and the line has also earned places in the permanent collections of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum and the MoMA in New York.

OXO Good Grips is a triumphant story of “good” industrial design making life better. This story is told over and over again, from case studies to marketing sheets to the company website retelling the origins of the

OXO design philosophy. It is a tale of OXO’s origins in the “everyday”: cooking, friends, apples, pained wife, and caring husband. Through this story, we understand where OXO was born and we are able to relate to the “goodness” of its philosophy because we all have had trouble with a vegetable peeler. This narrative is the reason people believe in OXO: everyday kitchen problem, user-centered research, universal design, making everyone’s life in the kitchen better. However, the OXO story is not just the origin story of a product; it is the retelling of the *myth* of industrial design: better design, better products, better life.

Almost any book about industrial design will emphatically make statements about design’s role in the future, in the name of progress, and for a better life. In a recent Taschen book *Design for the 21st Century*, the introduction wastes no time in declaring the importance of design in our daily lives and boldly states that if there had to be a common goal uniting the concerns, missions, and visions of all designers it is that the “primary goal of design is to make people’s lives better.” Pull another book off the shelf—from the prestigious Philips Company design group, and read, “Companies like Philips, wanting to help shape the future, are in a position to propose ways in which new developments in technology could improve the quality of people’s lives.”⁷ Or yet

However, this emerging user-centered design thinking benefited more than just the eventual users of these designs; there was an economics of user-centered design that proved to be a large motivation for developing objects using anthropometrics. In his biography of Dreyfuss, Russell Flinchum writes, “The charts also provided [Dreyfuss] with an additional sales tool. Who could disagree with the layout of a new design that incorporates the needs of what appeared to be the ‘universal man?’”¹⁰ The cultural understanding of anthropometrics, ergonomics, and human factors gave a kind of “objectivity” to the design process and gave user-centered design a quantitative credibility and reliability in the larger narrative of making products (and life) better. Likewise, the myth of OXO is more than innovative design through user-centered research, but the *idea* of innovative design through user-centered research. The *idea* of inclusive design of the elderly and arthritic becomes a selling feature for OXO. The idea yields an obvious conclusion: if a vegetable peeler was designed with arthritics and the elderly in mind¹¹, it must be good enough for the entire population. Without this idea of inclusion, OXO may have faced a different financial picture rather than the marketplace success story of operating in the black in its first full year and over \$3 million in sales in 1991. The universal philosophy remains important to the

OXO story, but, even Sam Farber acknowledges, “user-centered design is our main competitive advantage”¹² in the marketplace.

With universal design and to a certain degree with user-centered design¹³, there is an idealism that strives for inclusion, by considering as many users as possible in the design of an object. The word *user* becomes an objective and generalized category as “one who uses,” and in that sense, *user-centered* and *universal* conjure designs that are produced in the name of public bodies. This rhetoric broadly encompasses the needs of people (though actually *users*) and employs language that positions design as a quasi-philanthropic process meant to serve and aid a wide community of persons (indeed *persons*, rather than *users*), making life better, regardless of gender, race, class, or sexuality. In considering industrial design as user-centered, the design of objects is placed at the borderlines of sexuality, race, gender, and class, resulting from research that seeks common and “human” behavioral characteristics. In effect, this posits the results of design as somehow “objective” based on natural facts. It is understood that a soft Santoprene handle with gripper fins designed with ergonomics is good not just for the elderly or the arthritic, but for *everybody*.

However, the politics of difference regarding sexuality, race, gender, and class reaches into everyday life,

everyday objects and everyday design. I want to emphasize that this critique is not of OXO and its belief in high-quality utensils¹⁴; rather, my desire is to highlight the exemplary rehearsal of the universal progress narrative. While the rhetoric and methodology of universal and user-centered design makes products easier to use for a larger amount of people, the power of the universal myth disables a critical discourse regarding the object and its entwined relationship with the politics of everyday identity. Instead of discussing the creation of desire and consumption of design that depends on sexuality, gender, race, and class, the conversation shifts to usability, ergonomics, and objectivity. The rhetoric of *universal*, *objective*, and *rational* makes it difficult to engage in a design discourse regarding matters of sexuality, gender, race, and class.

Even the story of anthropometrics is not complete without considering politics of the body and notions of inclusion, exclusion, and representation—for the story of generating design “objectivity” via anthropometrics in fact becomes an “effort to abstract the notion of the public from the language of ethics, history, and democratic community.”¹⁵ Considering that Dreyfuss’s work in anthropometrics was termed the “universal yardstick” for “human requirements” and “good design,” it is illuminating to note the compromised state of objectivity with which the human factors charts were compiled

and published. Jim Connor, an associate at Dreyfuss’s firm, noticed that the anthropometrics for men were based on the bodies of larger men in the military, thereby not representative of “typical” American men. In an interoffice memo, Connor queried another associate Alvin Tilley:

In checking I could find no specific reference to any source.... only “armed forces studies” are noted. Does this mean that our 2.5 to 97.5 percentile men are all military? If so, wouldn’t this automatically screen out most civilian males—and especially those not meeting military physical qualification?¹⁶

A reply came from Tilley to Conner two days later:

Your point is well taken about the 2.5 and 97.5 percentiles not representing the civilian male population. However we are forced to make use of available sources representing the largest number of measurements with wide distributions...

Some day better data will be available. Until then we must make use of the tools we have now.¹⁷

This exchange between Tilley and Conner shows a disruption in the assumptions about inclusion and non-inclusion in anthropometric standards. Though anthropometrics posed

as the “universal yardstick” in its measurement of man, Tilley conceded that almost all of the measurements (from the 2.5 to the 97.5 percentile) were not representative of a civilian male population. Nevertheless, Tilley excuses the inability to universalize the physicalities of human differences through explanations of “extrapolation,” “impracticality,” and the future promise of “better data.”

The dialogue between associates at the Dreyfuss firm brings up questions in the myth of a universal narrative regarding how it represents or does not represent people and the idea of difference. The idea of universal cannot be wholly thought of as an inclusive one; it must be conceived as a *category*, one contained by criteria for both inclusion and exclusion. As a category, “the universal” is always a contextual one, making the very idea of, for example, the universal measure of man, a contingent and relational concept. The original information upon which the universal measure of man was comprised highlights the act of determining who is included or not included in the formation of the universal. Creating an idea of the universal is a constitutive process, in that it asks questions about inclusion that it continually answers for itself. The universal has the power to establish the criteria of who belongs within a particular context, but remains innocent to constructions of exclusions and contingencies. As myth, the universal measure of man

still becomes *the* universal measure of man because it alone has determined what may be called universal, even though it is exclusive of an entire population it claims to represent. By not understanding difference and its relation to a universal, we lose sight of the determination of “objective,” the exclusion, and the categorization. It is the unspoken politics of industrial design that produces identities and designates inclusion, as well as rules for membership, that have nothing to do with progress or a better life for much of the population.

3. Speaking of Functionality

The value of a handle shape, a material like Santoprene, or the entire philosophy of OXO Good Grips, are understood as speaking the language of functionality¹⁸. But as Jean Baudrillard appropriately states, “Every object claims to be functional, just as every regime claims to be democratic.”¹⁹ In relation to OXO Good Grips, it is important to understand how the rhetoric of universality is not a matter of *functionality* or *objectivity*. There is a degree of slippage that must be acknowledged regarding *universal* that is thought of in terms as *objective functionality* to one that is *subjective usability*. The words, “functionality” and “usability” are suitably and happily ambiguous—fungible and slippery in our understanding when molded into an object.

Thinking in terms of *functionality*, vegetable peelers do peel vegetables and apples—remember, Betsy Farber was merely having difficulty peeling apples for her tart, not suffering from a peeler malfunction. Functionality, understood as whether a vegetable peeler can peel fruits and vegetables, and usability, understood as whether Betsy Farber can easily perform the task, form a tight and conflating alliance in the reception and use of the object. The peeler speaks a singular language where a demented meaning of functionality is understood as how well the vegetable peeler feels in the hand of a user. In OXO’s idea of universal design, “function” would suggest that the peeler fulfills itself in the precision of its relationship to the real world and human needs²⁰, i.e., its usability. Baudrillard states that it is our understanding of the object as a *sign* where *functionality* is no longer understood as merely the imposition of a real task (peeling a vegetable), but rather as *usability* that speaks to the adaptability of the object (a Santoprene handle that adapts to the hand).

These interweaving connotations of functionality and usability spoken by the object as a sign enables it to transcend its main technical and operational function of peeling vegetables into one that is based on the elements of style and adjustments in the name of *universality*. The peeler operates in a new and worked-up

understanding of “functionality,” where its form changes do not necessarily correspond to the actual function of the object, i.e., the removal of the skin from an apple. However, it is nevertheless understood and then assigned the meaning of “functionality.” This meaning of the object as a sign of “functionality” is constantly understood by culture so that the conflation of *usability* (subjective) and *functionality* (objective) seems appropriate and natural. Baudrillard calls out that this “naturalness is the corollary of all functionality.”²¹

If Baudrillard states that every object claims to be functional, what is significant about this claim of functionality and the naturalness of this understanding? The commonsensical understanding of functionality spoken by the OXO Good Grip bears a certain kind of “goodness” as told by industrial design’s progress narrative. As witnessed by the success of Good Grips, the slippage in the understanding of functionality demonstrates that it matters very little whether the OXO Swivel Peeler actually peels vegetables better or not. However, the rhetoric of the Swivel Peeler and its sibling kitchen tools allows for people to buy into the idea of *better* and a company that designs specifically for better “functionality” for all users. Consumers can desire the Good Grip, not merely because it may reduce hand strain when peeling



apples, but because it satisfies a certain ideology of goodness allowing everyone to peel vegetables. We become more interested in the *idea* of using a “more functional” product than if the product actually works better or not.

This worked-up idea of functionality is indeed the progress narrative, in that as consumers we are invested in the idea of functionality as *good* so we want to purchase products that we believe are *better*. It is this rhetoric of “functionality” that endows an object with the power of persuasion:

we are no longer the subject who chooses, but the subject who believes. The idea of the universal and its stabilization depends on a blurring of the subjective usability and the objective functionality, through which it conjures the actual possibility of a universal, but most importantly makes universal a seemingly technical and objective concept. We believe that we are part of the universal; we believe we are a part of something better.

4. Designing the Citizen

If industrial design is entrenched

within a narrative of progress and universality, is there a place for the politics of identity within the industrial design process? Yes, as I will argue that sexuality, gender, race, and class are already constitutive of design ideology and deeply imbedded within the rhetoric of an object. Moreover, reliance on the universal narrative prevents a discursive understanding or realization of these issues. The “universal objective” user that is divorced from a lived identity only allows a human divorced from its sexualized, raced, gendered, and classed identity in order to make up the category of a universal subject. When design relies on an understanding that precludes these very real elements of identity—yet claims to be user-centered and universal—it creates an abstracted user resulting in a single and particular human norm.

Emphasis on the user as an abstracted human distracts from an understanding of how design is already involved in and created by the politics of everyday lives. Universal users as abstracted humans beget the current situation, where design discourse has difficulty in imagining how issues of identity politics affect the creation and consumption of design. If design can be understood as the expression and communication of culture, it is necessary to understand the ways in which design speaks and how designers visually communicate with each other. From

this we can understand that it is not always what is spoken, but instead what is semantically expressed through objects, where issues of sexuality, race, gender, and class reside within industrial design ideology, yet are never acknowledged under a system rendered blind by universality.

One of the methods in which designers communicate and evaluate meaning in objects is by using a bi-axial image map. This method provides a qualitative analysis of object form and focuses attention on how a form communicates certain feelings. The bi-axial image map organizes how products fall into categories and communicative forms, allowing designers not only to physicalize intended emotional cues, but also to help direct design and form a consensus about how words like “sexy” or “pop,” for example, are expressed.

The image map is set up on the span of two axes, intersected to form a cross, and opening up a field of four quadrants. Each of the axes are labeled with two descriptive terms, not in opposition, though communicating a spectrum of ideas. The task is not to communicate a descriptive modality with words that encompass a range of complex meaning associations, such as “sparse” versus “luxurious.” So for example, if a designer were to be mapping cologne bottles, she may label the vertical axis with “urban” versus “stately” and the horizontal axis with

“sexy” versus “shy” to evaluate the form that the bottles communicate. Images of cologne bottles can then be positioned relationally throughout the four quadrants based on a range of communicated meanings of urban-sexiness and urban-stateliness, or stately-shyness and stately-sexiness.

Product semantics can also be expressed through other types of image boards that express the lifestyles and spirit of the intended users of the to-be designed object. These lifestyle boards are composed of images, collaged from photographs, clippings, and corporate logos to build an imagined user that serves to drive an object’s semantics. Images of how the imagined user-group lives, their fashion, their activities, their hobbies, and other products are used to paint a scenario depicting what the object should embody. These lifestyle boards are a method of providing inspiration, which designers can then use throughout the development of a project.

In 1985, the Citizen Watch company released the first diver’s watch with an electronic depth gauge, called the Sporte Analog Depth Meter and designed by Tadashi Nakamura, as part of Citizen’s Life Design Center. Although Citizen was not officially established until 1930, its roots go back to its predecessor, the Shokosha Watch Research Institute, which produced its first pocket watch in 1924. It was dubbed the “Citizen” by

then-mayor of Tokyo, Shimpei Goto, because he hoped that the watch, a luxury item in those times, would become widely available to ordinary citizens and be sold around the world. Since that time, Citizen Watch has



become the world’s largest watch company, producing 292 million timepieces in 1999, about 24 percent of the world total. Citizen claims that more people depend on a watch made by them than any other timepiece. True to industrial design’s ideology of progress and universalism, Citizen’s roots lie in the democratic notion of access for all “citizens” of the world.

The image board developed by Citizen depicts the intended semantics of the Sporte Analog Depth Meter watch, which include ideas of equipment-ness, exploration, and

technology imagined for the watch. The image board shows a collage of underwater equipment and swimmers operating large facilities in action-oriented scenarios that evoke ideas of undersea work. Divers in dark-colored wet suits and scuba gear are pictured in shadowy waters with exploratory lamps to illuminate the sea environs. In looking at the watches, there is the semantic expression of the watch as a technical instrument associated with research and marine exploration. The watch is bulky with numbers and protruding buttons, surely to house the required depth metric devices and for easy handling, but also to communicate the idea of precision and an idea of equipment. This equipment-ness is emphasized by its choice of brushed stainless steel as the casing for the watch, well-suited for the rugged outdoors and in this case, underwater exploration. Taken as a whole, the watch expresses an austere yet robust professionalism and seriousness.

However, there is another image board that Citizen used to design this watch that enables a different reading. In addition to action photographs and equipment pictures, the collage features vacation-like images of couples: in one picture a male and female companion stand in the shallow beach surf at sunset framed by a leafy palm tree, and in another photo, a white man in a bright wet suit clutches the hips of a white woman from behind, holding her

body up against his as she looks back with a toss of the hair and a gleaming smile. The image board also allows the viewer to gaze at a spectacle of femininity by showing an image of two white women walking along side-by-side carrying scuba gear with heads cocked, smiling in causal conversation with each other. Another large photo positions the viewer to gaze at a white woman in a bathing suit under a glistening shower of water, head held back and eyes closed, while her arms bear an overflowing assortment of objects pressed against her body. Though the watch is imbued with a sleekness wrought with ideas of adventure and exploration, it is clear from this image board that the watch also tells the story of masculine, heterosexual, racial fantasies that are designed to speak to a specific audience. The same watch, through its bulk, rugged, and austere form, seeks to conjure fantasies of vacationing and a blatant sexualized desire for white femininity. Previous notions of universality or objectivity in the watch crumble in the face of revealed intentions of a watch designed and specifically imbued with ideas of race, sexuality, and class.

How do we understand Citizen’s role in the universal narrative of designing watches intended for the world? Who is the designated universal *citizen of the world*? The ideals, branding, and the very name *Citizen* embody the notions of a universal and democratic design narrative of a watch on every



wrist. While this dominant design discourse positions itself securely in a modernist discourse of progress, universalism, and objectivism, cultural theorists such as Kobena Mercer, David Eng, Henry Giroux, Richard Dyer, and Judith Butler insist on understanding the idea of the universal as one of *whiteness* and *heterosexuality*. These theorists ask us to consider how the symbolic order of sexual and racial norms intersect to produce viable and recognizable subject positions, especially in producing whiteness as an unnamed category and ubiquitous norm. It is from this invisible position of power that (male) whiteness presents itself as the universal marker for the citizen, fixing whiteness as synonymous with civilization itself.²² While the purpose of this project is to uncover the fallacy of a universal progress narrative within the discourse of design, I specifically want to underscore and make visible the symbolic norms of heterosexuality and whiteness that are functioning through the queer-, race-, and gender-“blind” objectiveness of this reigning ideology. As Citizen begins to demonstrate how these granted racial and sexual norms position *culture* by way of an *object*, the idea of universalism begs for larger research to specifically explore industrial design and its relation to whiteness and heterosexuality. The implications in *not* understanding how sexuality, race, and gender are neglected in the rhetoric of universalism is to

authorize the naturalizing power of whiteness and heterosexuality to continue unchecked and unqualified.²³ If as David Eng suggests, “colonial ideals of heterosexuality and whiteness acquire their efficacy only in and through a reiterative structure of citationality and a material structure of the circulation of commodities, capital, and knowledge on a global stage,”²⁴ there is much more to understand about how the object is both designed and consumed from these two positions of power.

The rhetoric surrounding Citizen watches serve to both acknowledge and demonstrate a universalism that implicitly creates a category of designation and its criteria for inclusion. Even Citizen Watch, as a Japanese watch company, through these image boards, distances itself from its own Asianness in the production of design in its appeal to an intended (global) audience. Citizen equates the heterosexual white male as *the* citizen of the world. It is the universal narrative that implies his citizenry as the major category to normalize definitions of class, race, gender, heterosexuality, and nationality. If the Citizen Sparte watch carries with it semantic notions of heterosexual racialized desires, what are the implications of a discourse under the umbrella of design’s universalism? In understanding design as an appeal to our notions of desire, who we think we are, and an idealized selfhood, is

a universal narrative in design leading us back to the universal subject of the white heterosexual man? To be a citizen of design, a universal rhetoric asks for a normative social identity and requires a heterosexualizing imperative bound to a hegemonic structure of whiteness.

5. Seeking the Gap

Industrial design is witness to the rise of the post-Fordist era, which suggests an idea of cultural production that arises from much more than mere mass production, but a complex relationship involving differentiation and targeting. Stuart Hall describes this change in manufacturing and retailing that has given rise since the 1950s and requires us to understand design within this modern industrial production regime. In describing post-Fordism, Hall writes:

“Post-Fordism” is a term, suggesting a whole new epoch distinct from the era of mass production... a shift to the new information “technologies”; more flexible, decentralized forms of labor process and work organization; decline of the old manufacturing base and growth of the “sunrise” computer-based industries; the hiving off or contracting out of functions and services; a greater emphasis on choice and product differentiation, on marketing, packaging, and design, on the

“targeting” of consumers by lifestyle, taste, and culture rather than by the categories of social class; a decline in the proportion of the skilled, male, manual working class, the rise of the service and white-collar classes and the “feminization” of the work force...²⁵

In the introduction to this project, I made reference to how the profession of industrial design has closely evolved in tandem with the post-Fordist era. Industrial design has transitioned from a profession that had in the past primarily concerned itself with “color and form” to one that now sells *design services* entailing a large series of activities that result in a design—from user-research and human factors to production and marketing. When industrial design operates within the context of a larger market system driven by the economics of market audiences, there is an irreconcilable breakdown in the rhetoric of an inclusive universal narrative to one that hunts “difference,” in order to appropriate it and idealize it for the market structure. Culture production in the post-Fordist era requires the rhetoric of inclusion so that the notion of difference can be depoliticized and contained.

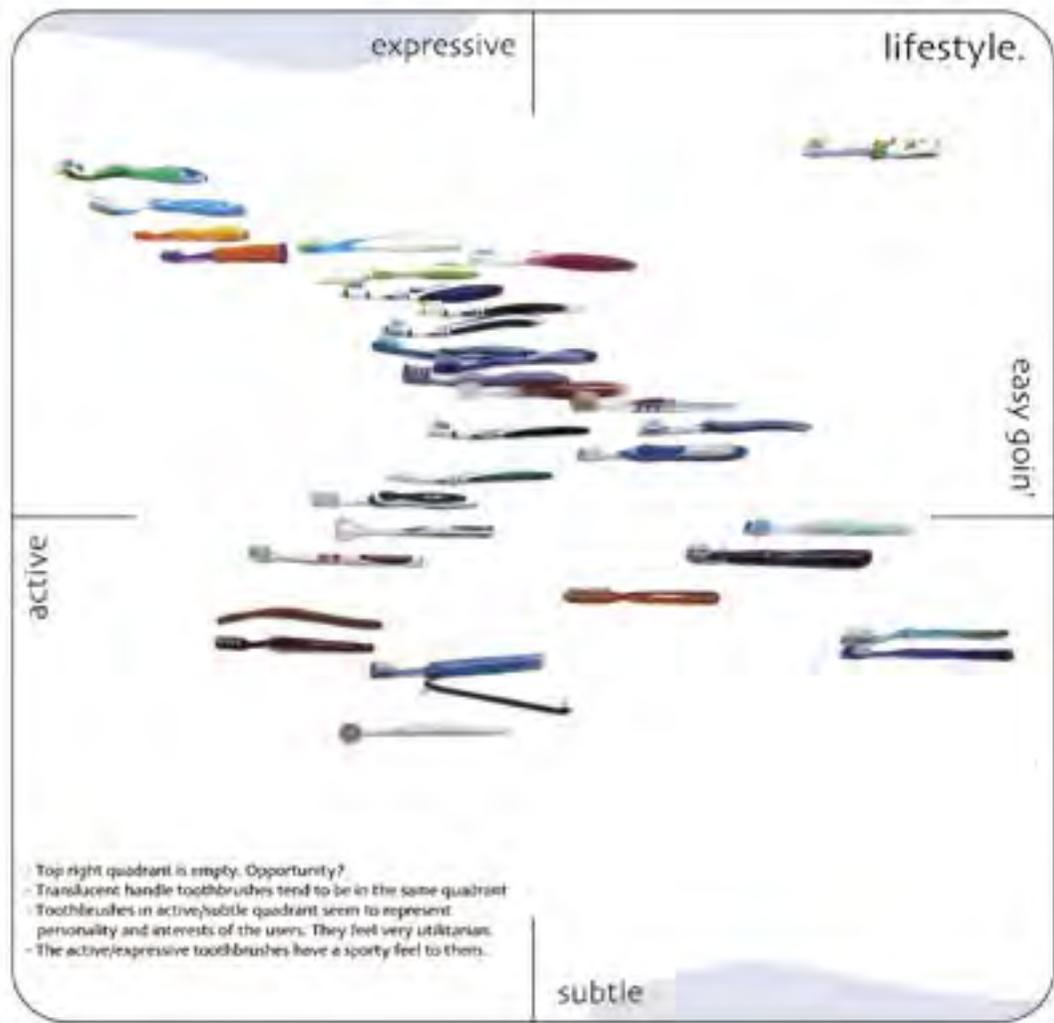
Industrial design can be understood through many materials, motivations, services, and products²⁶, but it is a profession that is driven by the socio-economic dictations of a

marketplace, and hence defines itself within this framework. In an article in *BusinessWeek online*, Bruce Nussbaum writes about design’s primary role in the “empathy economy.” He outlines the movement from a knowledge economy dominated by technology into an experience economy “controlled by consumers and the corporations who empathize with them.”²⁷ He sums up his article with the assertion that design can generate “products and services that provide great consumer experience, top-line revenue growth, and fat profit margins.”²⁸ In light of this ever-increasing alliance between design, consumer markets, and business, when industrial design speaks of the *user*, there is a slight of rhetoric. User-centered design becomes a myopic vision of *market-and-consumer*-centered design by a profession set within a business framework. Cemented within this market framework, the definition of *user* is normalized as only those who can buy.

How does difference function in a system of design that speaks of universal progress but operates under a market imperative? What are the ramifications in becoming subjects who believe in this narrative? While industrial design speaks of universal progress, looking back at the bi-axial image map reveals how industrial design manifests itself on an alternate trajectory, one that accompanies marketing on its hunts for the “new,” the “fresh,” the “different.” The

bi-axial map serves as an eloquent and succinct gap analysis mapping a landscape of design opportunity. Not only is the bi-axial map effective in organizing similarities, differences, categories, as well as our understanding of meanings, but it also provides the power to delineate the gap, where there is yet another market void to permeate, or another product desire to fulfill. Within the contours outlined by the map, the voids and gaps—where notions of identity, desire, difference and how we imagine our own individuality are found—rise to the surface: design opportunity is revealed. As industrial design speaks the rhetoric of universalism and user-centered design, it continually seeks, in fact, colonizing these gaps and places of difference in its hunt for the new, the cool, markets, buyers, and subjects who believe in myth. Difference and identity become an offering to an assimilating universal, yet are given no space within design discourse. The bi-axial map tells of a design methodology that hunts difference in order to sell difference. The gap becomes a resource to consume, a culture to appropriate, and a market to conquer. In a discourse supposedly blind to difference, difference is only acknowledged to be aesthetized and commodified.²⁹

A design discourse that focuses on universal subjects begins to rewrite the politics of identity divorcing us from our political and social histories.



Universalized design subjects are no longer tied to a racial heritage, a queer subjectivity, a gendered formation, or class alienation. This discourse, which seeks to deny the politics of identity, however, does not want to eradicate individuality. Industrial design is invested in promoting a sense of hyper-uniqueness and users with mobile subjectivities. It relies on the containment of people to that of

images that are highly individualized, but only when projected through a lens of products and design. It is this mobile individuality across a landscape of identities, needs, and lifestyles that allows design to continually hunt for the cool and the new in order to create markets and products. The universal narrative is not interested in the idea of difference in terms of lived identities,

Bi-axial map created in the initial stages of toothbrush design that map competitive products suited to user “lifestyle.”

but only a neutered subjectivity, separated from a social history and the identity politics of sexuality, race, gender, and class. In *Design and Crime*, Hal Foster discusses the penetration of design into all aspects of our cultural environment. He writes that the result is an environment where “desire seems almost subject-less today, or at least lack-less; that is, design seems to advance a new kind of narcissism, one that is all image and no interiority—an apotheosis of the subject that is also its potential disappearance.”³⁰ As subjects of this universal narrative we become abstracted, vaporous users without a lived identity, providing an open canvas for coolness and design.

The idea of a user formed through universal rhetoric is the same user that can believe in an ideology of design’s “functional objectivity.” Baudrillard describes a revolution where the system of “objects have now become more complex than human behavior relative to them.”³¹ He writes:

...there is no reason to assume that the unceasing forward march of *techne* will eventually achieve a mimesis which replaces a natural world with an intelligible artificial one. If the simulacrum is so well designated that it becomes an effective organizer of reality, then surely it is man, not the simulacrum, who is turned into abstraction... In the face of the



User boards, courtesy of Astro Studios, San Francisco.

functional object the human being becomes dysfunctional, irrational and subjective: an empty form, open therefore to the mythology of the functional, to projected phantasies stemming from the stupefying efficiency of the outside world.”³²

Industrial design plays a role in the socialization of cultures in the post-Fordist era by producing object as *signs* through which we are told to believe in universal progress. In a design discourse constitutive of these myths, it is users, consumers, and *humans* that turn into an idealized and uniform market.

On the office walls of OXO International hangs an assortment of single, lost gloves displayed in a vast grid. As a reminder for whom OXO designs their products, employees collect lost gloves found around the city and from their travels around the world. The gloves serve to show OXO’s commitment to universal design and “the different hands [their] products need to comfortably fit—large, small, male, female, young, old and in between.”³³ But like a hand without a body, the glove without a history becomes a misfired metonym, denying the missing body and history represented in the glove’s loss. It becomes a spectacle of diversity, difference, and individuality reorganized as *sameness*. The myth of universalism gives us a unified way of accommodating all of our differences, but tells us we must not

have a body, an identity, a history, or a politics of lived experiences. Industrial design seeks to give us the option of difference inscribed within the possibility to be the same. The myth sells us the idea of a unified difference, assimilated identities and disguises “the political nature of everyday life and appropriates the vulnerable new terrain of insurgent differences in the interest of a crass consumerism.”³⁴ Industrial design’s universalist ideology asks for our participation as citizens in the goodness of a liberal utopia not as *different* subjects, but as subjects contained within a category of unified assimilation.

Universalism and progress speak of democratic and utopian ideas of who we can be without the determining social constructions of sexuality, race, gender, and class. However, design has become central to a politics of identity where it provides a method of identification through products so that people can represent themselves and their relationship to others.³⁵ A discourse that denies talking about the specificities of human identity envisions (and is invested in) creating a notion of the public that can be defined by products and design. The idea of universalism in the context of product design presents a different idea of who we can be in an environment where queerness, race, gender, and class have been clipped from our identities. The notion of *public* that is abstracted from ideas



of individual (and group) identities allows for a culture of production to design for *everybody*, creating an open field for products and design to proliferate. Bound to a construction of sameness, it is *products* that will provide our markers of difference. People need only to believe and buy in order to project their subject-hood through objects on a landscape of identity provided by design. We are no longer users who determine objects, but citizens of a designed democracy where products demarcate what it means to be human. The rhetoric of the object will be the voice of our identity, outlining who we are and who we can be, but only relative to

the gleaming piece of design that we carry.

Conclusion

My desire is not to destroy the joy that beautiful objects of utility bring to a lived experience and identity. Nor is my intent to motivate the reader to inspect design objects in a reflection of how each of them contributes to a rhetoric of universalism or serves to negate a politics of difference. To perform such a misguided reflection would be to miss seeing the outline of a larger structure through which the object is only a piece of physical output. To understand the *rhetoric* of objects is to understand the

intentions, desires, and imaginations of a system, a framework that communicates through the object, design methods, myth, marketing, advertisements, and television. It is the framework that imagines an object's intentions, desires, and "functionality" for specific publics. The critical work to be done is in not understanding how individual objects contribute to a fallacy of progress and myth of universalism; rather, in understanding how the politics of difference functions (through its discursive non-presence), I hope to empower a new discourse of design that asks how the mechanism of industrial design (and its *current* discourse) is constitutively inscribed within its own system of meaning, social organization, and cultural identification.

Industrial design has gained power as an important cultural and ideological form, particularly within the discourse of difference and popular culture. Through the rhetoric of universalism, we are asked to believe in the mythic goodness and objectivity of industrial design. We are told of a better life, design for the masses, advocacy for the user, and representation for universal human subjects. The rhetoric of industrial design invests itself in the idea of liberal universalism and imagines a citizenry of sovereign individuals where our differences don't matter: a public marked not by cultural identities to which we are bound, but instead

by identities of ideal citizenship to which we can aspire. Alongside these myths of goodness and objectivity, the politics of identity finds itself awkward and unable to speak.

In our idea of democracy, we are given the freedom to choose, the power of the individual to determine her or his own identity or identities. In the U.S., this bleeds

into our notions of a free market where we also have the freedom to choose and buy products in order to reflect and determine our own identities. Citizenship is reconfigured as the ability to choose and to be a consumer—conferring our status of citizens based on a position as consumers. One need only recall the distillation of American

"democracy"³⁶ and consumerism in the "America: Open for Business" branding of patriotism in the days following September 11, 2001. Citizenship becomes defined as the freedom to choose and consume through a system that speaks democracy. It is this kind of democracy that industrial design is most interested in retaining, a



version inscribed between our power to choose and our position as a consumer.

Until now, I have only approached the issue of difference in an oblique way to understand how universalism operates in relation to a central subject—the white heterosexual male. At this point I must rehearse the central role of whiteness and how it operates within the discourse of universalism. Cultural theorist Steve Martinot tells us that universalism produces for itself a standard based on the liberal subject. It creates for itself the measure of human being. In producing itself as the norm, universalism understands itself and its normativity as white; and the universal human “by suppressing its recognition of differences, concretely devalues what differs.”³⁷ Universalism³⁸ is a system blind to its own creation and support of a cultural structure of hegemonic whiteness.

This new idea of democracy silently creates criteria for inclusion (and exclusion) in a reconfigured definition of citizenship. Under this market-defined democracy of consumer citizenship, we are organized by potential identities, aspiring identities, believing identities brought on through products. It is in this way that ideas of *queerness as difference* to the central subject of universalism poses a problem. Design under a market system can only idealize singular notions of identities; it is queerness and difference that cannot

be accommodated. Democracy and universalism demands a unified whole by speaking of equality, objectivity, and populism rather than a democracy that offers an accommodation of difference, history, and identity. This is the social power of industrial design: to outline the rules of citizenship in a democracy, achieving a body only as a consumer, and identity only through design. We are given the power to choose, to be who we want to be, and to buy our way into citizenship, but it is only inscribed within the fantasies dictated by male heterosexual whiteness. If we are only defined as citizens of a democracy based on our position as consumers to buy into the normativity of male heterosexual whiteness (the very same professional demographic of industrial design), we have much to fear.

By problematizing the current design discourse, I hope to make apparent the mechanism of a profession that thinks of itself as representative, but produces culture for a self-referential community of bodies. Within this framework, user-centered research will not be seen as providing its own evidence (and the reason for non-inclusion of identity politics), but instead will continue to be relied on to provide “natural” conclusions and evidence of “needs” requiring a design solution. The myth of liberal goodness works to construct user-centered design as a matter of conscience, progress, and solutions

rather than as an imposition of commercial power, cultural domination, and the organization of identities. Design is often challenged as having lost its progressive social vision. When discourse does not provide a platform for challenging the framework of production, industrial design will never be able to initiate progressive social change; it will continually seek to reproduce its market imperative and find its place as a service and tool for commerce.

How could industrial design be different? What should be taken away from this project? How does a discourse analysis provide an understanding of industrial design? The impulse may be to desire a new model for industrial design, perhaps operating in smaller scales of economy, for example. However, instead of gesturing at a new re-conceptualization of industrial design, what I would like to suggest through the discourse analysis of this project is the need for an awareness and consciousness of the framework through which we all engage with objects. It is this awareness that provides the opportunity to understand the limits and constraints of a discourse that contains the possibility of even imagining new directions of industrial design and its engagement with different human subjectivities.

At the crux of this project, I have attempted to demonstrate how the ideas of universalism and progress

are intrinsically built into the system of industrial design, and in fact, are necessary components in the logic of design to produce new products, new markets, and a forward momentum. It is a logic that must be iterated and reiterated to convince designers of the power of design, to convince users of the inclusiveness of design, and to convince consumers of the goodness of design. It is a self-referential, self-preserving, self-justifying narrative: better design, better products, better life.

Though the universal narrative gives no rhetorical space for the politics of identity, universalism is still constantly interacting with these subjectivities. Throughout this project, I have revealed points of rupture in the industrial design myth. *The Measure of Man*, Citizen watches, the biaxial image map, and the queer cultural performance of objects (as demonstrated in two sections that are not included in this online piece) are places of tension between the idea of an encompassing universal and the notions of difference. These places of tension and rupture show that ideas of difference, queerness, and identity politics are constantly chafing against and intertwined with this dominant rhetoric. The universal depends on this constant interaction with difference in order to organize itself. Difference is always kept close by in order to support the idea of the universal and form the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Difference

resides in the gap and voids where the marketing imperative hunts for the “new.” Difference, too, then, is built into the system and logic of industrial design. It only remains silenced, subsumed by the rhetoric of universalism, and unable to enunciate within the dominant design discourse.

These fractures in the master narrative of industrial design show the contradictions, instability, and vulnerability inherent in this system. The concept of universalism can be seen as a strategy that attempts to reinforce this discursive framework through which design is presented and understood. As witnessed by these ruptures, the framework is as an imperfect, unstable, and conflicted one. In order to reify, re-stabilize, recover, and repair itself, industrial design must continually reiterate its own narrative: rational, universal, goodness, progress—as it produces objects, meanings, social organizations, and cultural identifications. It is also through this process of reiteration that industrial design is able reproduce its heteronormativity, its ethnic sensibility, its gender bias, and its class privilege. The repetition works to reinforce the framework, determining the discourse of design and our ability to understand it in a way that never seems problematic, but instead natural.

Although the reiteration of this narrative seeks to control and submerge its interactions with the

politics of difference, it is this very same repetition that creates an opportunity to alter and change the course of industrial design. Through the ability to see these ruptures in the industrial design narrative as points of tension between the idealized universal and the politics of difference, the determinacy of the narrative can be subverted. For the sake of my own repetitive counter-performance, I want to emphasize that there is an invisible framework through which we understand industrial design and, moreover, that this framework is artificial and it is certainly unstable. With each iteration of the narrative, each performance of design research, each designation of users, each drawing of the bi-axial map, there exists the possibility to reform and alter this framework and push industrial design in new, different, and exciting directions. Each point of tension presents a now visible awareness, opportunity for acknowledgement, and choice for new design thinking. I hope to provide a platform for discussion and a space for a new vocabulary within design discourse to openly engage with difference and subjectivity. It is my intention that this space will inform a new discourse that provokes itself to rupture uniformity and act against assimilation, so that design can acknowledge and speak to humanness, lived histories, and the politics of sexuality, race, gender, and class.

Endnotes

¹ It is important to recognize that these *ideas* of difference are *socially constructed* differences based on perceptions of identity through which we all present ourselves.

² IDSA, “ID Defined,” (accessed 6 September 2004); available from <http://www.idsa.org>; Internet.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vilem Flusser, “About the Word *Design*,” in *The Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1999), 17-18.

⁵ By queerness, I not only mean the idea of variations of sexual subjectivities, but “queerness” as in occupying the position of difference and the non-central position to that of the universalized, white, heterosexual male subject.

⁶ “Henry Dreyfuss, “The New Society: Statement by Henry Dreyfus, President, On the Formation of the Industrial Designers Society of America,” in *IDSA Design Notes* 1 (April 1965): 2.

⁷ Philips Design, *Vision of the Future*, (Bussum, Netherlands: V+K Publishing, 1996), 17.

⁸ Clive Grinyer, *Smart Design: Products That Change Our Lives*, Carns-Pres-Celigny, Switzerland:

Rotovision, 2001), 6.

⁹ Norman M. Lloyd, “Comfort Criteria for Seat Design: Dreyfuss-Designed Armchair Provides Universal Yardstick for Passenger Comfort,” *Automotive Industries* (November 1, 1960): 44.

¹⁰ Russell Flinchum, *Henry Dreyfuss, Industrial Designer: The Man in the Brown Suit*, (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution & Rizzoli, 1997), 175.

¹¹ It is important to note that the myth of OXO Good Grips never speaks of it as design *for* arthritics and the elderly. It is a story of inclusion, not of specificity.

¹² “Getting a Grip of Kitchen Tools,” *@issue: The Journal of Business and Design* 2, no. 1, 24.

¹³ To clarify, universal design philosophy is about designing products so that the widest possible audience can use a product, including people with limited abilities, where as user-centered design is basing designs on the user behavior or experience.

¹⁴ On OXO’s website, in trying to define “universal design” the company states, “It is important to note that Universal Design does not mean designing products fully usable by everybody, since there is no product that can truly fulfill the

needs of all users.” This project does not attempt to dismantle OXO’s mission to design for a broad spectrum of users.

¹⁵ Henry Giroux, “Consuming Social Change: The United Colors of Benetton,” in *Disturbing Pleasures*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

¹⁶ Jim Connor to Alvin R. Tilley, December 7, 1960, *Measure of Man* Correspondence File, 1973.15.9, Dreyfuss Collection.

¹⁷ Tilley to Connor, December 9, 1960, *ibid.*

¹⁸ The understanding of OXO Good Grips in terms of its *functionality* is perhaps a mistake a designer would not make, as design vocabulary would dictate speaking of it in terms of *usability*. However, the common slippage and use of functionality by consumers makes this analysis relevant.

¹⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, (London: Verso, 1996), 63.

²⁰ Baudrillard, 63.

²¹ Baudrillard, 64.

²² Henry Giroux, “White Utopias and Nightmare Realities: Film and the New Cultural Racism,” in *Disturbing Pleasures*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 75.

²³ David Eng, *Racial Castration:*

Managing Masculinity in Asian America, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 142.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁵ Stuart Hall, “Brave New World,” *Socialist Review* 91, No. 1 (1991): 57-58.

²⁶ I acknowledge there are small industrial design studios that are not producing for mass-markets. I am speaking of industrial design and its relation to a larger market imperative of selling through design.

²⁷ Bruce Nussbaum, “The Empty Economy,” *BusinessWeek online*, 8 March 2005, (accessed on March 27, 2005); available from http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/mar2005/nf2005037_4086.htm Internet.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 198.

³⁰ Hal Foster, *Design and Crime*, (London: Verso, 2002), 25.

³¹ Baudrillard, 56.

³² *Ibid.*, 57.

³³ OXO Internation, “Who We Are,” (accessed 22 January 2005); available from <http://www.oxo.com>; Internet.

³⁴ Giroux, “Consuming Social Change,” 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁶ While the poster does not specifically present Democracy, as a anti-terrorism poster, the United States is positioned as free and democratic, in binary opposition to authoritarian and un-democratic “terrorists.”

³⁷ Steve Martinot, *The Rule of Racialization: Class, Identity, Governance*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 11.

³⁸ I include this summary to note that whiteness secures its place through a historical legacy and structure. Universalism stems from a history of eighteenth-century liberalism and its uprising against the arbitrary social stratifications and superiorities of medieval feudalism. It is from this understanding that universalism places an emphasis on the liberal body that seeks to wrestle free of social constructions (as with medieval feudalism), however with the hegemonic status of whiteness at its core.